

## **Pointers & Info for Students in Recitals**

by Nicola, 2007, updated February 2010

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*This is a generalized checklist of reminders that I provide to all my students as we are entering into recital time. Other teachers are welcome to use it and adapt it, with credit.*

*I have compiled these based on the protocols issued by various dance festivals and studios for participants of all ages and dance styles. These are expectations and suggestions, clearly stated, that lead to preparedness, may help prevent problems onstage and off, and cue students ahead of time for what is involved in successful performance, whatever their level of experience.*

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-Have with you the contact numbers for your dance teacher and the studio owner/show organizer. You or your dance teacher may be delayed or derailed and not make it on time. It is best to know who to call to say you can't make it, or to get some guidance.

It also helps to know exactly how to get a hold of last-minute tickets for your friends and family.

-There are often morning or afternoon rehearsals for studio recitals. If you can make it, attend. It may be worth it to see and experience the stage ahead of time. It is an opportunity to go over the sound levels, lighting and staging cue, as well as practicing your entrance and exit. Don't expect a full run-through, this only sometimes happens. If your teacher can't make it, s/he should appoint someone to know all these details. It will make a profound difference for you--especially if you have been used to practicing your dance in the same room, facing mirrors.

-Make certain you have packed all pieces of your costume and props, as well as accessories, and that you have tried out this arrangement at home and know that it will work, with no snags. Make sure you have a coverup, change of clothes, and a bra (it's hard to wear a bedlah home with jeans and a t-shirt). Shoes that you can quickly and easily slip on and off are helpful for keeping feet clean and safe. Make sure they are soft-soled.

-Please take the time to put on makeup, including mascara, red-toned lipstick, and blush, or as otherwise advised by your teacher. Stage lights, video and flash-photography will do funny things to your skin and the

shadows of your face. Stage lights remove most of the natural colour of your skin and exaggerate both prominent and receding portions of your face. Stage lights will also make scarred skin, cellulite, and wrinkles more visible.

-Make sure your underwear is not visible. Make sure you are wearing it. Stage lights can make fabrics transparent. No one wants to see your panties or pudendum on parade.

-Make sure your hair, feet, and hands are clean and well-groomed.

-Eat a light meal, e.g. some protein and vegetables. No pasta, beans, or cheese. Avoid fatty foods, carbonated drinks, and anything that could stain your teeth. Do not bring food into the dressing rooms.

-Arrive as ready as possible. You never know how much (or little) space there will be to change. Use as little room and mirror space as possible--there are sometimes as many as 20 people sharing one dressing room. Be respectful and considerate.

-Behave quietly and respectfully in the dressing room and backstage area, even if others don't. I expect, and other professional belly dance instructors expect, our students to behave as if they represent all other dancers, student or otherwise. Our dance is looked down on. Please be aware of that. Set a positive example. It will be difficult to resist chit-chatting if you are nervous--do your best to stay calm.

-Bring water and a snack--one that won't spill or stain. Respect any direction you receive as to where you can and can't consume it. Typically, food and non-water drinks are banned from theatre dressing rooms. This is to minimize clean-up, avoid damage to surfaces and furniture (and your costuming), and to keep the rodents away. Clean up after yourself--no one wants to step on your apple cores.

-Avoid use of hairspray, perfume, and nail polish (or remover) in the dressing rooms. It will be hot and crowded and no one wants to be poisoned, inhale chemicals, or be spilled on backstage. Consider leaving the perfume at home--I had my first asthma attack at a spring recital after walking through someone's perfume cloud. Even high-end scents are loaded with BPA, synthetic carriers perfume oils, and volatile alcohols.

-There should be no alcohol, drugs, or other intoxicants in use backstage or

by participants. This is extremely disrespectful to yourself, your fellow students, the audience, and may put the show organizer in a compromising position re. venue rental contracts, the law, and/or liability insurance. You may be refused entry to the stage. It is also unsafe--you may fall, trip, pass out, or have a reaction. Consider that you will also have to find your way safely home afterward.

-Expect that you may be nervous, afraid, quivering, shaky, nauseous, or have a suddenly small bladder. This is all normal. If you know you get a nervous stomach or bowels, prepare by taking appropriate medications. Breathe, smile, and shimmy gently to shake off the nerves and keep warm.

-Warm up your body with gentle shimmies, walking around, rotating your joints, and breathing evenly and regularly. Remember your hands, feet and face (open and close your mouth, smile, smack your lips). Open and close your hands and lift your arms up and out--be careful about hitting people!

-Remove gum and candy from your mouth before you reach the wings and make sure you have swallowed it or thrown it out. No one wants to step on or sit in goo or ruin a \$700 bedlah.

-Remember, in a big show or recital, it is typical that no one will tell you when to be backstage to dance. You *may* get a cue from the stage manager that your music/the stage is ready and for you to walk on. Know where you are in the program and when you are supposed to be backstage. The rest of your group/class should NOT wait if you are late. **MAKE SURE WHAT THE RULES ARE REGARDING THIS VIA THE STUDIO OWNERS OR PROGRAM.**

-If there is a problem with the music, just stay posed and be patient so they can correct it. If you are in the wings still, speak with a stage manager or helper. Be calm.

-Remember not to talk backstage, whisper if necessary.

-Remember you can be seen by some of the audience even when you are in the wings, so begin performing *before* you walk out and end *after* you are well backstage. This also gets you in the right frame of mind several seconds before you actually have to start. ("game face")

-If you choose to watch the show before you dance, do NOT wear a coin belt or other noisy costuming out into the audience. Be very careful about sitting down and getting back up in costuming.

-Smile, have fun, and try to be relaxed.

-If you make a mistake, smile and keep going. Most importantly, keep your feet in the dance. Listen to the music and try to jump back in as soon as you can. In a student show, the audience expects to see various levels and mistakes. Most people won't remember the mistakes, they will remember how you dealt with them and if you were enjoying yourself.

-Know and respect rules and guidelines that are in place regarding photography and videotaping, as well as cell phones and pagers. Studio owners and show organizers sign contracts regarding use of the theatre space and such things may be forbidden or even illegal. Often, organizers provide some still photos and/or video footage of the show to participants.

-Avoid dishing the dirt backstage, in the wings, in the dressing room, or in the lobby. You never know who is listening or recording you. It is also mean-spirited to talk ill of folks in the show. You'll have a crappy night, too, some time if you haven't already.

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